

the ROADRUNNER

Nebraska ♦ Department ♦ of ♦ Roads

December 2015/January 2016



Holiday Greetings!

Nebraska Department of Roads

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Governor Pete Ricketts

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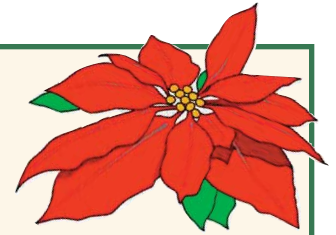
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The information in this newsletter is contributed by employees, retirees and friends of NDOR.



From the Director



Our Focus Going into 2016



Kyle Schneweis

Six months has flown by since being appointed Director, and this column gives me a good reason to pause for a moment, think about our successes in 2015 and our challenges as we head into 2016.

I'm quite pleased with the way NDOR staff has taken on the challenges of new initiatives while continuing to deliver on all the existing efforts that were underway when I arrived. As I tell stakeholders

when I'm speaking at events, I often receive credit for the work that was already in process, like the new website, the ribbon cutting for the Wahoo Expressway and the streamlined environmental process. Those are only a few of the NDOR accomplishments this year. Although we delivered well last year, as I've traveled the state meeting with employees and stakeholders, I've met very few who are willing to say we can't deliver better.

Building on the feedback from those meetings, I challenged every employee at the Department of Roads to be *more entrepreneurial, engaging and empowering* as you approach your work in 2016. Those Guiding Principles are already playing out in some of NDOR's strategic initiatives, like launching the Innovation Task Force; convening public meetings in January to discuss prioritizing capital projects and exploring accelerated project delivery mechanisms; and embarking more seriously on process improvements as part of Governor Rickett's Center for Excellence. More importantly, the Guiding Principles are being discussed and applied at the work unit level. I look forward to rolling out the Innovation Challenge in the first part of 2016 so we can share those successes across the department.

Most important, as we head into 2016, let's make sure we stay focused on safety. There's no greater goal we can have, especially during this busy travel season, than for our co-workers to get home safely after work and for the travelers of our state's highways to arrive safely. Time flies by – and I hope when I write this column next year, that we'll have many successes to celebrate, including an improved safety record. ♦

Esposito Named Deputy Director

Miki Esposito joined the Nebraska Department of Roads as Deputy Director – Policy and Administration on December 7. Esposito came to Roads after serving as Director of the Lincoln Public Works and Utilities Department since 2011. She was the first non-engineer and first woman to manage the department and was recognized as an innovative manager.



Miki Esposito

in 2002. She joined the City of Lincoln Attorney's Office in 2006, representing the Department of Public Works and Utilities in all legal matters. After a temporary post as Senior Policy Aide to the Mayor in 2010, she took a position as Compliance Administrator for Public Works and Utilities. She

was appointed as the Department's Director in December 2011 and served in that capacity until December 2015.

As far as accomplishments in her career, Esposito said, "I've been blessed to work with some of the most talented, dedicated and selfless public servants on many important projects where we've realized great success as a team. I think the most rewarding thing about doing what we do in government is that we get to spend our time, energy and effort making meaningful contributions to the quality of life of our citizens. That is what I'm most proud of and what I've enjoyed most in my career."

In her new position, Esposito will be responsible for supervising the BTSD,

Controller, Communication, Government Affairs, and Human Resources Divisions. Moving forward, Esposito said she wants people to know that she is a strong believer in an open, engaging and customer-focused approach to policy-making and governance.

Regarding her approach to leadership, Esposito noted, "I want to support and empower the people who report to me, to encourage and enable decision-making at the lowest possible level; to instill a sense of trust, loyalty and pride in the team; and to lead with integrity, grace and mutual respect."

She added, "My overall guiding principle will be to lend as much internal support as I can to those in our department who directly support our citizens. I feel very privileged to be part of the NDOR team. I look forward to the great initiatives, projects and accomplishments ahead."

Esposito and her "better half" Gary Greenwood, are raising two boys, Grady, 17, and Gavin 12. She loves spending her spare time with family and friends, traveling and playing volleyball. ♦



Innovation Task Force Meets



The multi-disciplined Innovation Task Force met November 18 at UNL's Whittier Research Center.

Director Kyle Schneweis and task force members gathered to explore new options for including economic impacts and maximizing transportations' value by delivering projects more quickly and efficiently.

National Award Presented to NDOR for US-75, Union South

The Nebraska Department of Roads received the National Award for Excellence in Concrete Pavement from the American Concrete Pavement Association (ACPA) in recognition of outstanding design and construction for Nebraska - US-75 Union South, in Cass and Otoe Counties, Nebraska. The project was named a Gold Winner in the State Roads category from among all projects constructed in 2014.

The \$11.1 million highway improvement project was built by Cedar Valley Paving, LLC and Subsidiary of Waterloo, Nebraska, and consisted of replacing 6-plus miles of an existing two-lane rural section of US-75, south of Union.

The existing pavement was replaced with 100,000 square yards of 10-inch doweled concrete pavement atop 5 inches of foundation course, placed on subgrade stabilized with hydrated lime. The project also included 10-inch plain jointed concrete, concrete drive-ways and 5-foot surface shoulders. Four bridges were updated and an asphalt overlay was placed on them. New guardrail was installed at all bridge locations.

In addition to District 1 Project Manager Ryan Hobelman, others involved with the project for NDOR included District 1 Construction Technicians Bill Swanson, Harvey Humphrey, William Cameron and Dan Ore who were recognized with Certificates of Merit at the January NCPA Concrete Paving Workshop for their inspection duties. Chris Lutz and Carlos Leija, NDOR Roadway Design Division, were the designers for this project.

Others involved with the project included the Bridge Division, Materials & Research, and the Communication Division. Robert Rice and the District 1 Maintenance staff in Nebraska City set up and maintained a 38-mile detour route during the project. Craig Branch and the District 1 construction survey crew provided construction staking for the project. Subcontractors on the project included Reilly's Construction Company, Wildcat Concrete Services, TAB Construction, Edwards Construction, Western Engineering, Beyer Mowing, DP Sawyer and Trafcon.



NDOR received a plaque from the American Concrete Pavement Association (ACPA) for national recognition of outstanding design and construction of Nebraska-US-75 Union South.

District 1 Engineer Tom Goodbarn congratulated all involved with the project, including Cedar Valley Paving, the subcontractors and NDOR, noting, "This was a beautiful job, successfully done with tight guidelines and major community impacts. It is well-deserved recognition for a national award-winning project." ♦

Nebraska Office of Highway Safety Addresses Driver Behavior

By Linda Wilson
Communication Division

Consider this scenario: Your co-worker was involved in a two-vehicle crash and was hospitalized with minor injuries. You are relieved to hear that he will be all right and no one else was injured. After his release from the hospital, he told you, "The accident happened because of the slick roads. I couldn't stop in time and ran into the other car."

Who is responsible? According to Fred Zwonechek, Nebraska Highway Safety Administrator for the Nebraska Office of Highway Safety (NOHS), a section of NDOR's Traffic Engineering

Division, there are two things wrong with the co-worker's statement: "First, the majority of car crashes are the result of human error. In this case, the driver didn't adjust his speed to match the conditions of the road. Second, by referring to the crash as an 'accident,' it is really an attempt to absolve themselves from accepting responsibility for their actions. Another factor: The injured driver wasn't wearing a seat belt when belt use could have prevented the injury."

This is an example of "behavioral traffic safety issues" that are addressed by the NOHS, with the goal of reducing the state's traffic-related

injury and fatality rates. A variety of innovative strategies are developed and implemented to achieve the goal, with five priority areas: occupant restraints (seat belts and child restraints), impaired driving, distracted driving, young drivers and speed.

According to Zwonechek, the NOHS is federally funded, receiving approximately \$4.5 to \$5 million annually from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), which provides oversight and management. The NOHS occasionally benefits from grants from other federal agencies, too.

(see **Driver Behavior** on next page)

Driver Behavior *(cont'd. from page 4)*

Zwonechek and his staff of seven employees award and manage between 400 and 600 grants annually, which may be for stand-alone projects, educational activities or long-term programs. They provide technical assistance to all grantees, as well as to any agency or organization. These include cities, counties, municipal government agencies, non-profit organizations and state agencies.

Grants Awarded

Many of the grants fund overtime, training and equipment for law enforcement – including patrol units, radar units, in-car cameras, alcohol breath-testing equipment and crash investigation instruments. Some other grants include a Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor in the Attorney General's Office who assists the local county attorneys in traffic-related cases. Another is a pilot project to Douglas County called "24/7," focused on applying stringent measures to get people with alcohol dependencies to change their behaviors.

Grants are awarded for training, surveys, public information and education activities. For example, funding is provided for community coalition and health department representatives to attend traffic safety-related conferences and training, keeping them engaged and energized to address these important issues.

The NOHS also maintains a lending library with audiovisual materials for a variety of traffic safety topics that



Photos provided by the Nebraska Office of Highway Safety

A State Patrol officer shares important information about seat belt use to teen drivers who participated in the "Ford Driving Skills for Life" program last summer at the Pinnacle Bank Arena in Lincoln, Nebraska.

can be borrowed by schools, community groups, workplaces, state agencies and others. These items are available through an online catalog at <http://www.transportation.nebraska.gov/nohs/index.html>.

Local Issues

Zwonechek noted that the work of the NOHS mirrors that of a public health program. "We were one of the first highway safety programs in the country to begin working with the State Health Department, back in the 1980s. We recognized that if we were going to address roadway behavior, we needed to treat this as an injury prevention public health issue. We have been successful and continue to expand this effort."

The NOHS continues to work closely with local health departments and many other agencies and organizations (both local and state) on issues such

as getting people to wear seat belts, not to drive impaired, not to drive distracted, and to be well rested when they drive.

While funds are focused on the priority issues that contribute to crashes, other issues are addressed as well. It's all data driven – using not only crash data, but also driver and vehicle data.

Major Focus

According to Zwonechek, a major focus is on the biggest problem: 18- to 34-year-old male drivers. "They are the least likely to wear seat belts, the most likely to drive impaired and to speed. When we review data and we are able to identify causes, including how, when, and where they happen, this group stands out."

The NOHS also prioritizes counties according to problem areas in determining who receives the grants and their distribution among the various entities, e.g., the county sheriff's department, the health department, nonprofit organization or community coalition. NOHS staff provides technical assistance with grant-writing to ensure they focus on the goals and objectives identified in the NOHS's annual highway safety plan.

Zwonechek began working at the NOHS in 1974 and has been administrator since 1981; he's the nation's longest-serving person in this position. While he has seen many changes over the years, one thing has remained constant: the passionate, dedicated people he has worked with that includes his staff and great people in communities across the state.

He noted, "In order to be successful, you have a passion for this work. If you're going to convince people that they need to change their behavior, you must be an advocate. We are rewarded because the outcomes are results-driven – we measure perfor-

(see Driver Behavior on next page)



Teen participants in the "Ford Driving Skills for Life" take turns wearing Fatal Vision Goggles that simulate the vision of an impaired person.

Driver Behavior *(cont'd. from page 5)*

mance annually. The work is rewarding because of the outstanding individuals who make a difference every day.

Challenges and Frustrations

While this work has its rewards, Zwonechek acknowledges there are challenges and frustrations, including the delay in getting funding allocations in a timely manner, making it difficult to plan for long-term projects.

Another challenge is the delay in getting timely data. Obtaining data in as close to real time is vital. To help compensate for these

data delays, they review fatal crash data reports daily looking for trends that need immediate attention.

Funding is provided by the NOHS to many agencies involved with traffic records systems, and considerable progress in data collection has been made over the last seven years.

According to Zwonechek, another frustration is changing people's behavior. "NHTSA was able to determine that 94 percent of the fatal crashes are a result of driver error. Four percent are roadway issues and 2 percent are vehicle issues. We target the 94 percent driver behavior issues. For example, it is frustrating when someone blames the weather for a crash, because the weather is never to blame, while it may be a contributing factor – it's ultimately the driver, driving too fast for the conditions, or a distraction, or an impairment."

Seatbelt Use

On the plus side, Nebraska is ahead of the curve in terms of public policy in most areas, with drivers for the most part following the laws and recognizing that it's the right thing to do; for example, the graduated licensing system, which was adopted in 1999, was well-received, particularly by parents. On the other hand, the lack of seat belt use continues to be a source of frustration, with the observed usage rate in Nebraska for drivers and front seat passengers at 80 percent – 8 out

of 10 Nebraskans are wearing seat belts as the law says they should. But on the flip side, 8 out of 10 Nebraskans are not wearing seat belts in fatality crashes.

Zwonechek noted, "One of the great challenges that exists is when reviewing fatal crash reports, including photographs and diagrams, and realizing that if the individual had been wearing a seat belt, they may very likely have walked away from the crash. Every 1 percent increase of seat belt use in Nebraska is about 20,000 additional people wearing belts. That is why we



Teen drivers practice their driving skills under a variety of situations, using a Car Driving Simulator.

work so hard to increase use rates, currently standing at 80 percent, compared to the national average of 87 percent."

He continued, "Not only is it frustrating to realize that the lack of a split-second decision by a driver who is doing something wrong can result in lifetime consequences, add to that the difficulty of getting people to understand that, even though they've never been involved in a crash, they are often paying for them through tax supported programs like Medicaid and Medicare for resulting injuries, especially those permanently disabling ones. Those costs are passed on to all of us. Increasing seat belt use could reduce these costs."

Another current concern: "Urban fatalities are far ahead of last year and haven't been this high for over 30 years. Most crashes occur within 25 miles of home, where drivers are familiar with their surroundings, get

complacent and don't pay as much attention. It's where driving impaired or distracted creates the greatest opportunity for crashes to occur because of the traffic volumes."

Good News

Despite the frustrations, there is good news. As far as impaired driving, Nebraska ranks very high in arrests – 4th in the country in arrests per capita – and according to a recent study from a leading personal finance outlet, WalletHub.com, they graded Nebraska the 6th strictest on DUI's in terms of the laws that exist.

According to Zwonechek, there are 1.4 million drivers in the state of Nebraska and 2.3 million vehicles. With more drivers every year, more vehicles on the road accumulating more miles, it increases their risk of being involved in a crash, yet the rates are going down.

"I don't like the fact that our fatality total will probably be the highest in the past eight years, yet our fatality rate will likely be lower than last year, because total miles driven are expected to be higher.

That's satisfying, but one of our main goals remains preventing the loss of lives."

Zwonechek's parting message: "Every person has the opportunity to impact traffic safety in and around their communities, in their families, in their workplaces, and people ought to talk about these things – whether it's seat belts, impaired driving or any of the priority areas. When crash stories happen close to home, it gets everyone's attention. But, it all comes down to having appropriate public policies accompanied with educating the public and personal responsibility – that's our priority." ♦



“Ice & Snow” Hot Topics at Operations & Maintenance Conference

By Denise Wallman
Operations Division

With “ice and snow” season fast approaching, district engineers, district operations managers, maintenance superintendents and supervisors joined staff from NDOR’s Operations Division to focus on winter operations at the 2015 Operations and Maintenance Conference. The conference was held October 6-8 at the Marina Inn in South Sioux City, Nebraska.

Presentations ranged from managing a winter event to optimizing the durability of snowplow blades. Reporting winter road conditions, coordinating that information with the State Operations Center and how it all plays an important part of winter operations were also elements of the focused discussions.

Department of Transportation (DOT) representatives from Iowa and Kansas shared information on maintenance operations in their states and highlighted their best practices. Roadway Design Engineer Jim Knott and Phil TenHulzen, Design Standards Engineer, along with other NDOR Division personnel, presented important updates and trending information during both the general session and break-out sessions.

Seventeen graduates of the Leadership Development program were recognized at the Awards Banquet. Denise Wallman, Operations Division, received the annual District Appreciation Award.

No one slept during Dr. Jeffrey Hickman’s eye-opening presentation on “Equipment Operator Fatigue.” Dr. Hickman is the Group Leader, Behavioral Analysis and Applications at Virginia Tech Transportation



Conference attendees visit exhibitors during a break.

Photo by Dan Luedert

Graduates of the Leadership Development Program

Level I

James Land, D-5 – Kimball
Jeffrey Martin, D-7 – Imperial
Kurtis Peck, D-2 – Elkhorn

Level II

Michael Chambers, D-7 – Arapahoe
Kendall Foster, D-6 – Big Springs
Kent Lopez, D-8 – Valentine
Charles Miles, D-5 – Alliance
Jeffrey Oehm, D-1 – Lincoln
Ronda Ward, D-5 – Chappell
Arnold Wehmeyer, D-2 – Fremont

Level III

Cynthia Jelinek, D-4 – Grand Island
James Laughlin, D-2 – Omaha
John Lutz, D-5 – Gering
Charles Osborn, D-8 – Ainsworth
Randy Sabata, D-4 – Hastings
Anthony Tschirren, D-3 – Neligh
Raymond Walrod, D-7 – Imperial

Institute in Blacksburg, VA. His presentation was based largely on actual case studies that measured how work and rest schedules factor into crashes and accidents caused by driver fatigue. Hickman noted that driver fatigue should not be just the employee’s concern, but the concern of all who want to see the employee arrive home safely – their manager, supervisor and family. Among the important things mentioned that we can do to remedy driver fatigue during winter operations:

- Encourage the use of periodic breaks.
- Encourage equipment operators to report to their supervisor when they are fatigued.
- Increase the frequency of vehicle maintenance.

NDOR Director Kyle Schneweis shared his observation that department maintenance personnel have a great sense of pride in their work and there is a lot of good happening across

the districts. He encouraged all to adopt the guiding principles of being Entrepreneurial, Engaging and Empowering in the quest to improve our stewardship of taxpayer dollars. Director Schneweis stressed that each of us needs to be creative and accountable and that adopting the “three E’s” should be “*our* plan, not *his* plan” as we continue to improve our work processes. ♦

Dr. Jeffrey Hickman, Group Leader, Behavioral Analysis and Applications at the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, talks about equipment operator fatigue and drowsiness and how these factors can contribute to crash events.

Photo by Tiffany Wells, District 2, Omaha



Are You Prepared for “Old Man” Winter?

The weather through mid-December has been mild, compared to recent years. But as anyone who knows Nebraska weather will tell you, the question is not *if*, but *when* that will change to snow and winter driving conditions. Are *you* prepared?

Each of the eight NDOR districts prepares months in advance for the snowplow season, with sand, salt and deicing materials gathered for a full winter's season. All of their trucks have been checked for snowplow operating conditions and calibrated for spreading materials. With changing weather conditions throughout the winter season, motorists should be prepared, too.

Know Before You Go!

Most important, drivers are reminded to consider whether they should be driving, and if not safe to venture out, to wait until road conditions improve. If you must travel, monitor weather forecasts and road condition reports before you leave.

For 24-hour-a-day, year-round Nebraska road condition information and traveler information, the following options are available:

Phone - dial 511 from a cell phone or landline; if outside Nebraska, dial 800-906-9069.

Web - www.roads.nebraska.gov or www.511.nebraska.gov. The 511 website provides a wealth of information including road conditions, camera views of selected roadways, current weather information and color-coded roadways to show speeds to indicate a slowdown in real-time.

Mobile App - download at the App Store or Google Play and search for Nebraska 511.

Watch for Snow Plows

When the snowplows are out on the state's highways, they cause soft snow to swirl, which can make it difficult to see the plow, or for the plow operator

to see you. Drive with your low-beam headlights on in rain, snow and fog. Make sure your headlights, taillights, and windows are clean and clear of snow, so you can see and be seen.

In addition to standard snowplows, tow plows will see increased use this winter season. A tow plow is a trailer pulled by the plow truck that swings out to the side and can plow snow and apply deicer. According to Roger Kalkwarf, District 1 Operations & Maintenance Manager, they will have five tow plows in operation this winter in the Lincoln area, compared to just two last year. According to District 2 Operations & Maintenance Manager, Dale Butler, they will have 12 tow plows in operation in the Omaha area. Both Kalkwarf and Butler remind drivers that since each tow plow uses one less truck and operator and has two blades, covering two lanes at a time, it is important to give the tow plow plenty of room to operate.

Whether following a standard snowplow or a tow plow, drivers are reminded to be alert this winter season when they see the yellow and blue flashing lights, to maintain a safe traveling distance between your vehicle and the vehicle ahead; to reduce speed in all weather conditions, including snow, ice, icy patches, blowing snow and bridges that may be icy; watch for black ice; and watch for message boards with alerts on them.

Heed Laws

Also, it is important to remember that when traveling outside of a business or residential district, it is unlawful to follow a highway maintenance vehicle (snowplow, truck, or grader) more closely than 100 feet when it is plowing snow, spreading salt or sand, or displaying a flashing amber or blue light. If conditions permit, however, drivers may carefully pass a maintenance vehicle.

Motorists may use studded snow

Winter Weather Words to Know

Winter Storm Watch – A winter storm is possible or approaching.

Winter Storm Warning – A winter storm is imminent.

Snow Advisory – One to five inches is expected.

Blowing and Drifting Snow Advisory – Visibility can be at or below a quarter mile.

Wind Chill Advisory – Wind chills of -30 to -35 are expected.

Freezing Rain/Sleet Advisory – An accumulation of freezing rain or sleet could make exposed surfaces dangerous or cause damage.

Travel Not Advised – The Nebraska State Patrol, the Nebraska Department of Roads and local emergency responders warn motorists not to enter highways, roads, or streets after this advisory has been issued as hazardous conditions have been reported.

Road Closed – If the State Patrol or Nebraska Department of Roads show a state highway or any part of the Interstate as “Closed” on their Advanced Traveler Information System (ATIS) and/or on the 511 road conditions reporting system – this means the highway or the Interstate is *officially closed to traffic* – until the “Closure” is removed from the reporting system.

tires in Nebraska from November 1 to April 1. School buses, emergency vehicles, and mail carrier vehicles may use them anytime during the year.

Make sure everyone in a motor vehicle wears a seat belt and children are in a car safety seat. Do not use cruise control in wet or snowy weather and do keep your gas tank full.

Additional winter weather driving and safety tips may be found at www.roads.nebraska.gov/safety/driving/winter. ♦

NDOR Transit Mobility Management Project Launched

By Kari Ruse
Rail & Public Transportation Division

The NDOR Transit Section has procured the services of SRF Consulting to launch a statewide Mobility Management project to develop and implement a coordinated, regional strategy for transportation. SRF Consulting is headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota, but project management will be provided primarily through their office in Omaha. The project kicked off November 18, with a meeting between Kari Ruse, NDOR Project Manager, consultants from SRF, and subconsultants. The project's duration is

anticipated to be eight to twelve months.

"Mobility Management" is defined as a strategic approach to service coordination among transportation providers to create a full range of transit services. The project strategy will focus on coordinating transportation services among public and private transportation providers, including recipients and sub-recipients of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds. The primary objective of the project is to determine if regionalized public transportation through Mobility Management is feasible in Nebraska. The project will

also identify methods for coordination to improve the sustainability, efficiency and accessibility of the transportation service delivery system across Nebraska.

To gather input from stakeholders, NDOR will organize a Statewide Coordinating Committee and up to six Regional Coordinating Committees. Both committees will meet regularly during the project to review information and provide direction. The public will be invited to provide comments through public meetings and surveys. As they become available, all project materials will be posted online at nebraskatransit.com. ♦

Transit Spotlight

Reach Your Destination Easily (RYDE) Transit



Photo courtesy of RYDE Transit

Reach Your Destination Easily, or RYDE Transit, provides public transportation in seven rural Nebraska counties. Their federally-funded, 19,000-square-foot bus storage and office facility is located in Kearney, Nebraska. In fiscal year 2015 RYDE provided 120,000 passenger boardings.

District 5 Engages Students During Business and Industry Tour

NDOR's District 5 recently participated in the 2015 High School Business and Industry Tour organized by the Scottsbluff/Gering Chamber of Commerce. About 250 local students attended the event, which is conducted twice a year. This is the third year that NDOR has participated.

The focus of the tour is to inform local high school students of the many current and future employment opportunities in the community, hoping that students will remain or return to the community. The tours also connect students to the local post-secondary educational and technical opportunities which are required for many of these careers for those who remain in the community after they graduate from high school.

The tours are based on the Nebraska Career Education Model, with careers organized into six different fields, which include 16 career clusters. Participating employers in each field: Business/Marketing & Management – 4 employers; Communications/IT – 6 employers; Human Services & Resources – 2 employers; Health Sciences – 4 employers; Environmental & Agricultural Systems – 4 employers; and Industrial, Manufacturing & Engineering Systems – 4 employers, including the Nebraska Department of Roads.

NDOR's tour highlighted some of the hardware and software applications used to demonstrate how integral

information and technology is for day-to-day work. Innovations that help solve some of the problems associated with our highways were also discussed, including demonstrations showing the ability to communicate remotely with cameras and weather stations to get travelers instant conditions to plan their safe travels. The session concluded with a discussion of career opportunities at the Roads Department and included time for a question/answer session.

District 5 employees who helped organize NDOR's portion of the event included Maryanne Jacobs, Hwy. Project Manager; Marty Gillen, Hwy. Construction Tech IV; Marcella Kreiling, Hwy. Maintenance Crew Chief; Melissa Lally, Hwy. District ROW Permits Officer; and Mindy Whiteley, Staff Assistant.

Preparations included planning presentations with innovative and hands-on activities for the students, as well as providing promotional materials and detailed career information, including a handout describing job titles, educational requirements, job descriptions and salary. Students were also given a business biography with a contact



Marcella Kreiling, Hwy. Maintenance Crew Chief, Gering Office, gives students the opportunity to check out equipment, including highway snowplows and a truck used for spreading pavement deicing chemicals.

name and number to obtain additional information about the employer, internships and future job openings. At the end of the tour, students completed a survey to help in planning future tours and provide contact information to see if students will remain or return to the community in the future.

According to District 5 Construction Engineer Drew Parks, "These tours provide an opportunity for us (NDOR or District 5) to educate the students of the Nebraska Department of Roads' role in the transportation industry as well as encourage local students in pursuing employment that suits their skills and talents. It is also a chance for us to strengthen our relationship within the local community and promote our business." ♦



Marty Gillen, Hwy. Construction Tech IV, Gering Office, shows high school students concrete samples and explains how they are cast, cured and tested for their compressive strength. Students learned about career opportunities at NDOR during the 2015 High School Business and Industry Tour.

Photos by District 5 Staff Assistant Mindy Whiteley

Governor Recognizes NDOR Employees and Managers of the Year

Ten NDOR employees were recognized by Governor Pete Ricketts for their accomplishments as Employee of the Year and Supervisor/Manager of the Year. They joined outstanding state employees from other state agencies during recognition ceremonies held on October 29 at the State Capitol Rotunda.

Those receiving Employee of the Year awards: **Bryan Baker**, D6, Highway Maintenance Crew Chief; **Christopher Hassler**, Human Resources Division, Highway Programs Specialist; **Terry Hughes**, D3, Highway Maintenance Worker/Sr.; **Lynette Kowalski**, D4, Highway Construction Technician III; and **Troy Lytle**, D1, Highway Construction Technician III.

Those receiving Manager of the Year awards: **Erin Allen**, D8, Administrative Assistant I; **Tyler Carlson**, Materials & Research Division, IT Business Systems Analyst/Supervisor; **Duane Collins**, D7, Highway Project Manager; **Toby Fierstein**, Roadway Design, Engineer IV; and **Casey Wirth**, D5, Highway Maintenance Supervisor.

Each year, agencies select one non-management/nonsupervisory employee per 500 from their agency and one supervisor or manager per 500 from their agency whose job performance has exceeded the highest standards and contributed to the overall effectiveness of their agency. Congratulations to these outstanding NDOR employees. ♦



Bryan Baker



Christopher Hassler



Terry Hughes



Lynette Kowalski



Troy Lytle



Erin Allen



Tyler Carlson



Duane Collins



Toby Fierstein



Casey Wirth

Moving Forward

Decatur Toll Booth Ends 60-Year Era



The Decatur toll booth is now just a memory. Long a landmark at the end of N-51, the two-story toll house has been demolished and replaced with pavement to provide a smooth drive over the river between Iowa and Nebraska. According to District 3 Project Manager Jeff Francis, the project has been completed and is open to traffic.

The Decatur Bridge, with its iconic metal trusses, opened in 1955, and the Burt County Bridge Commission collected tolls to pay off the bridge and maintain it. With high maintenance costs and eventual replacement looming, the commission sold the bridge to Iowa and Nebraska two years ago. Both states pay for upkeep with tax dollars, and the toll was no longer necessary.

The booth may have been a Decatur icon for many years, but most agree that it's time to move on. According to one resident, "It's progress, and that's a good thing."



We Get Mail...

To Chris Ford

Re: Snow Storm on 11-17-15

The effort and performance displayed by your crews and supervisors on the south end yesterday demanded at least a quick note of appreciation. They are the true heroes of these storms, and their efforts to keep the public safe and protect lives, including mine, rises to the level of heroic on a regular basis. Not only do they work diligently and tirelessly to clear the roads, they constantly keep me informed of crashes and potential dangers; we are in constant communication not only during, but prior to these storms insuring that we are as prepared as we possibly can be. Often they are the first to report an accident and they are always there, helping with the injured, moving the debris off the roadways, helping to get the stranded to safety, directing traffic, and offering any other assistance they can. All of these things are done with great risk to their personal safety and under horrible working conditions. It is a rare quality anymore to find an individual that is willing to put the safety of others ahead of their own.

The service these folks provide to the public and the support they give to law enforcement does not even come close to stopping there. I work nearly every shift alone and it seems that on almost a daily basis I receive support in some fashion from the men and women at NDOR. From the comradery and friendships to searching cars, making arrests, assisting the public, setting up special enforcement activities, safeguarding the construction and maintenance projects, and keeping my car and equipment running—the list is simply endless. I have even had crews see that I am outnumbered making an arrest and stage themselves nearby, never interfering, but letting the criminals I am dealing with know that this trooper is not alone.

Human nature tends to lean towards going out of our way to complain about something we are unhappy about and rarely taking the time to tell someone they are doing a good job. From myself, and everyone that made it home safely yesterday during this storm, I wanted to take the time to say “Great job NDOR and thank you for taking care of all of us!”

With my complete respect,
Nebraska State Trooper Ron Kissler #226

November 11, 2015

I want to thank you for fixing Hwy. 92 between Mead and Yutan so quickly and efficiently. I know you often receive criticism for taking too long for fixing something people know nothing about. Clearly the sinkhole needed fixed and you fixed it quickly. Those of us that commute from Wahoo or Mead to Omaha had quite a hardship with the highway being closed, but it didn't last long at all.

Thank you for all you do to keep the people of Nebraska safe.

Amy Schenk

To the Roads Crew...

While driving home from work Thanksgiving night on the slick roads, I thought, “this is a group of people I am grateful for!” The cold, nasty winter weather took you all away from your warm houses and gatherings.

I commute from Milford to Lincoln four days a week at 05:45. It is a rare day when there is not some path cleared for me on the Interstate. Thank you! You have a thankless job and I'm sure you have many critics; however, the next time you throw your thermos into your truck in the middle of the night—remember there is at least one grateful driver who is singing your praises. Merry Christmas!

Author Unknown

Editor's Note: This note was in a Christmas card delivered to the Central Headquarters' Receptionist.

The Department of Roads receives numerous complimentary letters. The letters printed here are representative of those often sent praising the many fine and deserving employees of the Department of Roads.

NDOR 2015

Year in Photos





All ⁱⁿ the Family

Information for "All in the Family" should be sent to the Communication Division. Appropriate information will be included in future Roadrunners.

Please note: Birth announcements will be published as long as written permission is received by the Communication Division. This is necessary, as NDOR is required to adhere to privacy laws under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

Births

Congratulations to Shawn and Brandi Jording on the birth of their son, Hudson James, born December 16. Shawn is a Hwy. Designer II in Planning & Project Development. Brandi is a Hwy. Contracts Technician II in Construction.

Weddings

Congratulations to Mike Rudnick and Donna Hughes who were married in Arizona on October 5. Mike is a Hwy. Project Manager at District 8 in Ainsworth.

This 'n That

Congratulations to Rick Ernstmeyer on his retirement after 44 years of service. Rick was a Traffic Analysis Supervisor in Planning and Project Development.

Congratulations to Dan Necas on his retirement after 45 years of service. Dan was a Hwy. Project Manager in Construction.

Congratulations to Bob Malmquist on his retirement after 36 years of service. Bob was a Highway Electronics Manager in Operations.

Congratulations to Bruce Trautwein on his retirement after 21 years of service. Bruce was an Electrician in Operations.

Congratulations to Rodney Cook on his retirement after 30 years of service. Rodney was a Hwy. Maintenance Worker Sr. at the District 1 Superior Street Office in Lincoln.

Congratulations to Leonard Cernik on his retirement after 11 years of service. Leonard was the Hwy. Construction Management Tech at the District 1 Superior Street Office in Lincoln.

Congratulations to Jerry Engler on his retirement after 32 years of service. Jerry was a Crew Chief at District 1 in Beatrice.

Congratulations to Sue Nickel on her retirement after 20 years of service. Sue was a Hwy. Maintenance Worker Sr. at District 6 in Lexington.

Dillon Byre completed a 4-4 season playing as a guard on offense and a defensive end for the Lincoln Southwest High School Football Reserve Team. Dillon is the son of Dale Byre, Jr., Quality Assurance Manager in Materials & Research.

Congratulations to Alex Shafer on earning the rank of Eagle Scout in November. He joins his older brother, who became an Eagle Scout in 2013. They are the grandsons of Ethel Skinner, an Appraiser II in Right-of-Way.

Congratulations to Hannah Beethe for winning the D-2 State Volleyball Championship. Hannah attends Exeter-Milligan and is the daughter of Jane and Mark Beethe, Appraiser Review Supervisor in Right-of-Way.

Congratulations to Kellie Naylor who passed the Nebraska Real Estate Commission's Broker's exam. Kellie is a ROW Agent in the Negotiations/Relocations Section.

Wyconda Walstrom has been accepted by Ross University School of Veterinary Medicine in St. Kitts, West Indies, and will start classes in January. Wyconda is the daughter of Mike Mattison, Engineer IV in Operations.

Seasons Greetings

Service Awards

Congratulations to these dedicated individuals for their work and continued service with the Department of Roads. They celebrate their service dates in *December 2015 and January 2016*.

40 Years

Gary Witte, District 1

30 Years

Mark Bors, District 1

Norman Evans, District 7

Jill Hipke, District 8

Randy Williams, District 7

20 Years

Alan Grooms, District 4

Douglas Hoevet, District 5

Sullivan Lewis, District 2

Susan Nickel, District 6

Thomas Sawyer, Business Tech. Support

Norman Silverberg, District 3

Tiffany Wells, District 2

Paul Wisnieski, Roadway Design

10 Years

Derek Adkins, Materials & Research

Andrew Buchmeier, District 1

Austin Cook, District 8

Michael Costello, Business Tech. Support

Jerrid Fuehrer, District 4

David King, District 8

Karla Smith, Right-of-Way

Jeff Thomsen, District 4

Ice and snow . . .
take it slow



**Drive Carefully and
Wear Your Safety Belt!**

NDOR Events Calendar

— December —

National Drunk & Drugged Driving Prevention Month

- 9 Blood Drive – Community Blood Bank**
*NDOR Central Headquarters
Contact Diane Holthus @ 402-479-4580*
- 11 Hwy. Commission Meeting**
*8:30 a.m., Hwy. Commission Meeting Rm.
Contact Sarah Kugler @ 402-479-4871*
- 12/18 - 1/3 You Drink & Drive. You Lose.
National Crackdown**
- 16 RoadToasters**
*12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m., Hwy. Commission Meeting Rm.
Contact Glenn Williams @ 402-479-3628*
- 17 Letting**
*1:30 p.m., NDOR Auditorium
Contact Kendall Stege @ 402-479-4528*
- 18 Bd. Public Roads Class. & Stds.**
*9:00 a.m., NDOR Auditorium
Contact LeMoyne Schulz @ 402-479-4436*
- 24 State Holiday (4 hours) – Christmas Eve**
- 25 State Holiday – Christmas**

— January —

- 1 State Holiday – New Year's**
- 5 New Employee Orientation Program**
*NDOR Auditorium
Contact Denice Sears @ 402-479-3656*
- 13 RoadToasters**
*12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m., Hwy. Commission Meeting Rm.
Contact Glenn Williams @ 402-479-3628*
- 15 Bd. Public Roads Class & Stds.**
*9:00 a.m., NDOR Auditorium
Contact LeMoyne Schulz @ 402-479-4436*

- 18 State Holiday – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day**
- 22 Hwy. Commission Meeting**
*8:30 a.m., Hwy. Commission Meeting Rm.
Contact Sarah Kugler @ 402-479-4871*
- 22 Bd. Examiners for Co. Hwy. & City Street Supts.**
*10:00 a.m., NDOR Materials & Research Conf. Rm. 129
Contact LeMoyne Schulz @ 402-479-4436*
- 27 RoadToasters**
*12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m., Hwy. Commission Meeting Rm.
Contact Glenn Williams @ 402-479-3628*

— February —

- 4 Letting**
*1:30 p.m., NDOR Auditorium
Contact Kendall Stege @ 402-479-4528*
- 10 RoadToasters**
*12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m., Hwy. Commission Meeting Rm.
Contact Glenn Williams @ 402-479-3628*
- 15 State Holiday – Presidents' Day**
- 19 Bd. Public Roads Class & Stds.**
*9:00 a.m., NDOR Auditorium
Contact LeMoyne Schulz @ 402-479-4436*
- 19 Bd. Examiners for Co. Hwy. & City Street Supts.**
*10:00 a.m., NDOR Hwy. Commission Meeting Rm.
Contact LeMoyne Schulz @ 402-479-4436*
- 21-27 National Engineers Week**
- 24 RoadToasters**
*12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m., Hwy. Commission Meeting Rm.
Contact Glenn Williams @ 402-479-3628*

If you would like a key event included on upcoming calendars, call the Communication Office 479-4512 or e-mail linda.wilson@nebraska.gov. Information for the February/March Roadrunner should be received by January 29, 2016.